



Written Testimony Submitted by
David G. Carter, Chancellor
Connecticut State University System
to the Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Thursday, February 10, 2011

Members of the Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I regret that due to other commitments, I am unable to appear before you today. I do, however, wish to submit comments for your consideration on Proposed Bill 5058, *An Act Concerning College Tuition and Fee Waivers for Veterans*.

The Connecticut State University System (CSUS) is proud to provide educational opportunities to veterans through waivers of tuition and extension fees at our four universities: Central, Eastern, Southern and Western Connecticut State Universities. It is important to note that the CSUS Board of Trustees already provides a waiver of 50% of fees charged for summer school session courses for degree-seeking Connecticut veterans. In FY10 this waiver was extended over 250 times at a cost of \$220,693.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, known as "the Post-9/11 GI Bill," is the federal education benefit program for individuals who served on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. Benefits payable under this program are significantly more far-reaching than the World War II era GI Bill. Veterans who have served at least 90 days on active duty after September 10, 2001 are eligible for the program, which provides up to 100% payment for tuition and fees, as well as an allowance for books and housing. This benefit offers another option for veterans in addition to the Montgomery GI Bill or other Federal Educational Assistance programs assisting veterans.

In recognition of this benefit, in FY2009, P.A. 09-159 was implemented to ensure that veterans receive all of the benefits to which they are entitled. This public act incorporated into the waiver statutes a provision stating that if any veteran has applied for federal educational assistance under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, the constituent units of higher education will waive the payment of tuition in excess of the veteran tuition benefit.

Extension fees paid for summer sessions are also covered under this program for eligible veterans. The extension fee waiver already provided by the CSUS Board of Trustees, combined with other Federal Educational Assistance programs assisting veterans, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill, means that for many veterans, 100% of summer session course fees are already fully covered, without the need for legislation. However, if the proposed legislation should move forward, it is important that the same type of provision provided by P.A. 09-159, which establishes that the tuition waiver applies only to any tuition not covered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill, be implemented for the waiver of Extension Fees as well. This will ensure that veterans continue to receive all of the benefits to which they are entitled.

If the statutory provision we are suggesting above is not included, or if none of the veterans receiving the waiver are eligible for benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the fiscal impact of this proposal would be approximately \$250,000. However, assuming the number of veterans receiving the proposed waiver are also eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the statutory provision is included in the bill, the fiscal impact would be minimal.

Please know that the Connecticut State University System is proud to honor any waivers deemed appropriate by the General Assembly for the brave citizens who have served our country, as well as the families of those who have given their lives to preserve our freedom.

Please contact Jill E. Ferraiolo, Associate Vice Chancellor for Government Relations/Communications, if you require any additional information or have any questions regarding this matter.